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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1968
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 2010
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1987
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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN'S RASHT VALLEY CALM-- FOR THE TIME BEING?

REF: A. A. Dushanbe 0139

[1](#)B. B. Dushanbe 0162

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Despite serving as the headquarters of the Islamist opposition during the Tajik Civil War, PolOffs encountered a quiet Rasht Valley during their January 22-24 visit. Local government leaders argued Islamic extremism did not exist in Rasht, due to the "increased religiosity" of its people and its distance from the Uzbek border. However, the potential for extremism exists if the region does not achieve economic development and receive international assistance, particularly for health care. End Summary.

EXTREME FAITH WITHOUT EXTREMISM

[1](#)2. (SBU) Muhammadsharif Tolibov, Chairman of the Rasht District, told PolOff the Rasht Valley did not have any problems with Islamic extremism. By contrast, he posited, the Sughd Region was fighting extremism due to its close proximity to the Uzbek border, which facilitates the movement of people and funds to and from Uzbekistan. Further, the Rasht people are observant Muslims who would not take to such excessive expression of their religion.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Hoji Qurbon Barotov, imam of the Garm Friday praying mosque, the largest in Rasht Valley, claimed he enjoyed good relations with the government and occasionally traveled with local government representatives to surrounding villages to explain government policies and discuss the dangers of extremism. Many local religious leaders receive their religious education outside of Tajikistan, particularly in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. He admitted that exposure to different sects of Islam sometimes created friction with local leaders after their return home. (Note: Barotov serves as the regional coordinator for the imams of all mosques in Jirgatal, Tajikobod, Nurobod, Tavildara and Rasht districts. Approximately 20-25 people worship daily at his mosque, and close to 1,000 every Friday. In an unusual display of entrepreneurship, he built a small power station at his mosque, which includes a generator, and sells energy to his neighbors to generate proceeds for his mosque. End Note.)

[1](#)4. (SBU) Junaydullo Niyozov, the Prosecutor of Rasht District, confirmed that extremism posed no threat to Rasht's stability. He stated that his region was very calm overall, and that 96 percent of local crimes had been solved in 2006. The only two "serious" crimes had been a woman who killed her illegitimate child, and a man who killed his sister for having a child out of wedlock.

CALM BUT DESPERATE

¶5. (SBU) Tolibov requested U.S. health care assistance. A sufficient number of specialists worked in the region, but they lacked modern equipment to care for patients. Garm's hospital was responsible for treating people from 152 different villages, but lacked a way to transport people to and from the hospital. He specifically queried potential U.S. assistance in providing a new ambulance which could serve patients located in rural areas.

Tolibov then claimed Rasht does not have a high-level of drug use or HIV cases, since people were more religious than other parts of the country, and abstained from illegal activities as a result.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The request for health care assistance echoes comments heard during trips to Khujand and Isfara. Post plans to provide the contact information for two health-care assistance implementing partners, NGO's Project Hope and Counterpart. While the U.S. government will likely be unable to meet their medical needs, sending even a small amount of supplies would be a positive first step.

¶7. (SBU) The Embassy's humanitarian assistance partners occasionally deliver medicines and medical supplies to the region. Post will endeavor to better publicize such deliveries. This kind of assistance, with an American face on it, will make it more difficult for an unemployed, poor youth to believe anti-U.S. extremist propaganda that the U.S. government is waging a war against Islam. While none of the above individuals would admit that a problem with extremism existed, all recognized the potential for radicalism, should the government prove unable to improve the economic situation for their citizens. End Comment.

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